and developed. The MNRE has prepared a Draft National Policy on Bio-fuels, which is under consideration of Government of India.

The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has provided financial support to nine States in 2005-06 for raising of about 18 crore seedlings of Jatropha and Pongamia and to 18 States in 2006-07 for raising of another about 18 crore seedlings of these plants. The proposal of the MoRD for establishment of the National Mission on Bio-diesel and launch of its demonstration phase (Phase-I) is under consideration of Government of India.

Department of Bio-Technology has initiated a Micro-mission programme on production and demonstration of superior quality planting material of Jatropha based on oil content of 30-35% and seed yield of 3-5 tonnes per hectare. They have raised 22.48 lakh plants under nursery at different places and have initiated R&D projects for improvement of oil quality and seed yield and identification of superior varieties.

The Ministry of Agriculture through National Oil Seeds and Vegetable Oils Development (NOVOD) Board is promoting Jatropha and Pongamia under the Scheme of Integrated Development of Tree borne oil seeds. The NOVOD Board has undertaken model plantation of Jatropha in about 10,000 hectare area and Karanja in about 1400 hectare area for producing parent material for undertaking large scale plantation. NOVOD Board have identified elite planting material of Jatropha and Pongamia under their R&D programme and have preserved the germ plasm. Besides, NOVOD Board has sanctioned model plantation of Jatropha in 1445 hectare and Karanja in 55 hectare during 2007-08.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), under All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) on agro-forestry, have initiated efforts in respect of Jatropha for collection of germ plasm, evaluation trials for growth, seed yield and oil content, hybridization, reproductive biology, agri-silvicultural trials, molecular characterization, biochemical activities and farmers training. ICAR has identified a Jatropha variety for commercial cultivation.

(c) to (e) Presently, the activities initiated by the Government are concentrating on research & development for development of superior quality planting materials and bio-diesel production technologies, testing of diesel engines using bio-diesel and their demonstration, etc. Targets are, therefore, not fixed.

Assistance to Darjeeling Hill Area for renewable energy

1403. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received a request from West Bengal to declare hills of Darjeeling as a special category area, allowing the Central financial assistance for renewable energy programmes in line with other States of Himalayan region; and

(b) if so, the response of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY (SHRI VILAS MUTTEMWAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Such a proposal was received from the West Bengal Government but was not accepted. However, the Government has conveyed its commitment to extend 90 per cent subsidy under the Remote Village Electrification programme to all remote villages including those in the State of West Bengal.